

World's Student Christian Federation.  
European Student Relief Series No. 8.

# YOUR CHRISTMAS, AND THEIRS.

**C**HRISTMAS is almost upon us; not a little of the old pre-War **Christmas** feeling has returned. Round common-room fires, in cheery studios, on the sports-grounds, even in whispered and contraband chats in the lecture-rooms, students, men and women alike, are discussing the good times the vacation will bring. In England, in Wales, across the Tweed, in the misty old streets around the Sorbonne and the Luxembourg, all through Italy and Switzerland, in the lands of the North, in Calcutta, Tokyo, Peking, Cape Town, Melbourne and New York, everywhere where there are students with only the barrier of examinations between them and the vacation, such confidences as these are over-heard. "I'm off home on the 23rd. Hope my gun's well oiled." "My people are giving us a great time—theatricals, dancing, and all that sort of thing." "I'm going with friends for winter sports." "Moi, je vais en Angleterre, je veux absolument voir le 'London fog'!" The world seems one great game of puss-in-the-corner; everyone rushing wildly from where he is to where his neighbour was.

Or at home, what preparations there are for our return. What orderings from the grocer, what shoppings, what care and thought in planning and scheming for our happiness. Truly, **Christmas** is the communion of Peace on earth, and good-will to all men. But what of all this joyous ritual of **Christmas**, with its carols and its feastings, in the Universities of Central Europe, the very lands that gave birth to so many **Christmas** customs? *There* this feast is dead. There, there is no expectation; no looking forward except with fear, no anticipation except of hunger, no thought other than desolation. Yet there are students there too, aiming for the same ideals as our own, following the same paths in Arts and Sciences, children of great men who have left their work and their discoveries as a world-free legacy to learning, men and women with the same capacities for enjoyment, with the same need of food and sufficient clothing; and with their severe and fuelless winters an even greater need of warmth and comfort. Tens of thousands of students in Austria, Hungary, Poland, Czecho-Slovakia and Germany, in addition to their University studies, are working, when sufficiently lucky to find employment, as waiters in restaurants, wood-cutters in the forests, as teachers, typists and clerks in order to scrape together that bare 500 Kr. a month (equal to 10/- in English money), the



very lowest amount on which life can be held together. Their clothes are thread-bare, patched and darned, their boots mere wrecks, lodging is at a premium, food scarce, bad, and, approximately, eleven times as dear as before the war. A cake of soap costs more than one-tenth of the average student's total monthly income. These men and women come, in almost every instance, from homes that before the war were comfortable; they knew the joys of sports, of travel, of home-coming, music and dancing. Now many of them are dying from sheer exhaustion and hunger, from illnesses which they cannot afford to cure, dying too, not seldom, by their own hands when circumstances have grown too baffling, and hope dies.

Out of our comfortable sufficiency, can't we send to them who lack everything? Clothes we no longer use, a few shillings we should spend without thinking? Five shillings—the price of a dance ticket, or a tie, or a box of chocolates, a lunch in town, or an upper circle seat at the theatre, what does it mean to us? Certainly nothing vital. What does it mean over there? It means that twenty practically starving men and women fellow-students can begin their grey day's weary work with at least a cup of hot cocoa and a piece of good bread inside them. Put that fact in the balance with your new book or your friendly treat and weigh them for yourself. Or, as a Norwegian student wrote: "Is it then so unthinkable, that we should give what we ourselves really need, if it will save our brothers' lives?"

Tolstoy tells of the poor cobbler who dreamed that the Christ would visit his basement room, and waited eagerly the whole day following. He helped the old soldier crossing-sweeper, but no Christ came; he fed a poor woman with her baby, and gave her garments from his small store, but still no Christ; he stopped two people quarrelling, and they went away down the street hand in hand, but the Christ came not. With the evening, perplexed and saddened, he nodded over his reading, and, as he looked, the dark cellar-room became suffused with light, and the shadow of the crossing-sweeper passed across and said, "'Twas I," and the shadow of the poor mother said, "'Twas I," and the shadow of the reconciled ones said, "'Twas I." As the season of good-will fills our rooms with light, it will be the shadow of a fellow-student saved from despair, which, this year, even more than the faces of those we love, passing across, will speak to us of the Giver of all Fellowship.

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All gifts raised by National Student Relief Committees for the World's Student Christian Federation European Student Relief Scheme should be sent to the Treasurer, M. Louis Hess, 13, Avenue de Champel, Geneva, Switzerland.

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